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WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT – A CASE STUDY OF AWAKE

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ABSTRACT

In Modern era, women are not just as equal citizens but as agents of economic and social growth. The approach to gender equity in the five year Plan is based on the recognition that interventions in favour of women must be multi-pronged and they must (a) provide women with basic entitlements, (b) address the reality of globalization and its impact on women, (c) ensure an environment free from all forms of violence against women physical, economic, social and psychological, (d) ensure the participation and adequate representation of women at the highest policy levels and (e) strengthen existing institutional mechanisms and create new ones for gender mainstreaming and effective policy implementation. Hence the present work through the light on efforts of AWAKE which is a not-for profit, Non-Governmental Organization, established in 1983, with the mission of 'Empowering Women through Entrepreneurship for Economic Development'. It is an ISO 9001-2008 organisation, totally devoted to Entrepreneurship Development among women both rural and urban areas of India. Awake has a unique approach of 'entrepreneur guiding entrepreneur' through voluntary effort of successful women entrepreneurs by counselling, training, business incubation, mentoring and peer group support. Awake is a recognised body in the policy advocacy forums of Government of Karnataka and Government of India and it has also bagged many national and international awards. The present work troughs the light on the introduction, objectives, services, achievement, recognition and awards of Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Karnataka.

KEYWORDS: AWAKE, Women Entrepreneur, Social growth, Policy, Economic

INTRODUCTION

The very idea of an organized association for women entrepreneurs stemmed from the compelling need to empower and employee women stand on their foot and so, Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Karnataka (AWAKE) was born in 1983 i.e, In December 1983, seven successful women entrepreneurs Ms. Madhura Chatrapathy, Ms. Kiran Majumdar, Ms. Lekha Chand, Ms. Shandriila Naidu, Ms. Indrajeet Sahani, Ms. Aban Minochar and Ms. Supanya Datta got together and formed Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Karnataka, for short, AWAKE, in Bangalore. With the vision to build a strong force of women entrepreneurs, they motivated women to embark on their endeavour of entrepreneurship and supported them to establish themselves as successful entrepreneurs, thus helping them to join the economic mainstream.

In 1984, AWAKE started with **Business Counseling** as its main service offered to prospective women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs were enrolled as **Members** of AWAKE. Over the years, **Entrepreneurship Development training** was offered comprising of Awareness programs, Entrepreneurship Development Program and Skill development trainings and workshops. AWAKE extended

its services as a support agency by organizing conferences and networking platforms for its members and thereby enhanced their growth. AWAKE became a portal for exchange of information that lead to the establishment of **Research and Resource Centre**. AWAKE expedited the growth of women entrepreneurs in food processing by establishing a **Business Incubation Centre** at Bangalore. AWAKE started associating and collaborating with several agencies to support its activities. Initially, the activities of AWAKE were concentrated in Bangalore and during early 1990s, the services were expanded to other districts of Karnataka. AWAKE's contribution to the **empowerment of rural women** has been recognized internationally. AWAKE's services to members evolved with growing **technology trends** and thus enabled members to match with the pace of the industrial growth.

OBJECTIVES OF AWAKE

- To promote entrepreneurship among women and thereby empower them to join the economic mainstream
- To enhance the status of women in the society, by creating a culture of entrepreneurship amongst women in both rural and urban areas
- To develop successful models of entrepreneurship for emulation world-wide

The AWAKE has core principles and values like 1) Peer group support and network building are key factors in development of successful women entrepreneurs, 2) Practitioners of entrepreneurship are the best counselors, facilitators and mentors for grooming potential entrepreneurs, 3) Networking with mainstream organizations is essential for enhancing the standing of women as strong, independent, economic actors, 4) Symbiosis, rather than activism is the appropriate approach in solving problems or in attempting development, 5) AWAKE will remain a learning organization in the sphere of women development. In-order to achieve all these it has made the following vision and mission.

Vision

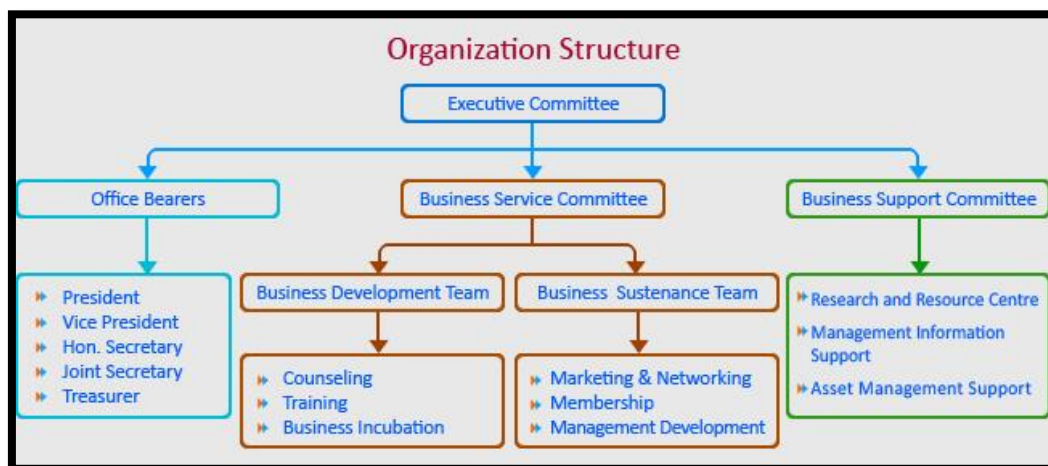
- Reaching out to more women and creating Entrepreneurs who will become role models for emulation world-wide

Mission

- To empower women through entrepreneurship development to improve their economic condition

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

AWAKE is registered as a Membership Organization under the Societies Act. It is entirely run by women entrepreneurs and has women entrepreneurs as its members. The activities of the organization are executed by fifteen member executive committee of voluntary women entrepreneurs, supported by a team of professional staff.



SERVICES OF AWAKE

AWAKE has developed a unique 4S module programs which encompasses all the programs conducted to support entrepreneurs at different levels of enterprise development.

- ↗ Stimulus
- ↗ Start-up
- ↗ Sustenance
- ↗ Support

↗ STIMULUS PROGRAMS:

These programs to motivate and provide information to women to take up entrepreneurship.

Business Counseling: Business Counseling is conducted for potential entrepreneur aspiring to start her own business enterprise. Counseling helps the prospective entrepreneurs to introspect their strengths and weaknesses, identify their talents and gives them the confidence to choose their line of business activity. Counseling is also conducted for established entrepreneurs seeking information and guidance for managing their enterprise efficiently/enhancing their business. Counseling sessions are conducted on every Thursday from 2 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. at the Business Counseling Centers of AWAKE at Bangalore and other districts of Karnataka. Counseling is conducted by Certified Business Counselors voluntarily, who are themselves established women entrepreneurs and are equipped with training in professional counseling and also by a team of sector specific specialist and technical consultants.

Entrepreneurship Awareness Program (EAP): AWAKE creates awareness about entrepreneurship among women and youth by holding one day *Entrepreneurship Awareness Programs* in rural and urban areas, and also in colleges.

↗ STARTUP PROGRAMS :

These programs aimed at capacity building, training, providing relevant information and support for aspiring women entrepreneurs to start their own enterprise.

Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP): AWAKE conducts **Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP)** for women and youth intending to start a business in urban and rural areas. Entrepreneurship training is imparted through structured training module at the end of which the participant is expected to develop self confidence and motivated enough to start an enterprise for their economic self sustenance. The program comprises of various modules delivered through interactive sessions with experienced faculties. The methodology includes lecture session, group discussions and specifically designed location-specific business games and case studies. AWAKE also organizes need based EDP in association with other developmental and donor agencies. The duration of the training varies from ten days to six weeks depending needs of the trainees and the donor agencies. The follow-up sessions for EDP trainees are conducted up to two years after the training to ensure that the budding entrepreneurs get all the support required to establish their enterprise.

Skill Development Programs: AWAKE conducts need-based Skill Development Programs for women in various sectors like food processing, handicrafts, tailoring, embroidery, garments, artificial jewellery, trading, eco-friendly products, candle making, chemical products, mushroom cultivation, herbal products, catering, motor coil winding housekeeping, beautician training , many of the service industry related trainings etc. During the programs, essential information related to raw materials, product processing, development and designs, marketing the products, packaging and quality control are provided. The programs are conducted for both urban and rural women and youth, considering the business opportunities and market trend of the environment. Entrepreneurship Development Programs combined with Skill Development Programs ensures delivery of comprehensive training for prospective entrepreneurs to start their business. Regular follow-ups are conducted to assess the additional training needs of the participants.

Business Incubator :

- **Business Incubator for Food Processing at Bangalore**
- **Ananya – Food Incubator at Bijapur**

Business Incubator for Food Processing at Bangalore:

Since its inception AWAKE realized that a significant number of women wanted to start enterprises in Food processing. However, lack of infrastructure and uncertain market acted as strong deterrents. To encourage the women interested in Food processing AWAKE established a Business Incubator for food processing at Bangalore, the first of its kind in Asia, in 1992. The incubator was set up with financial assistance from Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) with a space provided by Government of Karnataka at the Industrial estate, Rajajinagar, Bangalore and technology facilitation for plant and machinery by USAID and Centre for Technology Development (CTD). AWAKE's food incubator consists of a full fledged production facility with necessary licenses (FPO), clean, hygienic and scientifically designed premises, equipped with facilities for food processing, packaging and labeling, in addition to with technical assistance whenever necessary by entrepreneurs. The facility enables start-up women entrepreneurs to produce fruits, vegetables and cereal based products, spice and spice blends, dried and fried snacks and bakery products. Women entrepreneurs can utilize this facility to manufacture their products by paying nominal fees and can market their products under their own brand names. The business incubator facility has helped many women entrepreneurs to acquire sufficient confidence and a market niche, enabling them to setup their own facility. The present equipments available in the Business Incubator are Fruit juicer, Pulper, Inverter, Drirer, Pulverizer, Mixer, Grinder, Baking machine, Bottle and plastic sealing machine, cold storage, vaccum sealing. The incubator is upgraded by adding more machineries and quality control equipments as and when needed. The incubator has facilities for learning as well as conducting Basic Analytical tests as per quality guidelines specified for respective products.

Ananya – Food Incubator at Bijapur:

In 2009, AWAKE set up 'Ananya' - the Food Incubation centre at Karnataka State Women's University (KSWU), Toravi Campus, Bijapur with the support of Karnataka Science and Technology Academy (KSTA) and KSWU. The facility supports entrepreneurs and SHG members from Bijapur and surrounding areas wanting to take up entrepreneurship ventures in food industry. Any potential/ existing entrepreneurs can use the facility at a nominal cost for commercial production of their food products. The incubator houses facilities for processing of dry grapes, papads, dough kneading, vermicelli or noodle extruder, rolling, chilli pounding, citrus juice extraction, pomegranate deseeding, mincing, pulper and finisher, pulverizer, peeling machine and a mini flour mill. It also consists of weighing machines and sealing machines. The incubator is used by women entrepreneurs and also for conducting hands-on training in food processing for prospective entrepreneurs.

Trainer's Training Program:

- **Development / NGO Sensitization Programs**
- **Trainers Training Program (TTP)**

Development / NGO Sensitization Programs : AWAKE realized that the success of its programs would depend upon the support that its trainees and clients would receive from the various agencies involved in promoting business and industry, both at the government and NGO level. Hence the need to 'sensitize' the officials of these agencies to the particular needs of women, especially in the rural areas, was apparent. AWAKE conducts sensitization programs for officials of financial institutions, developmental agencies associated with industrial and commerce development, women empowerment and other promotional agencies. The program focuses on gender bias, gender sensitivity and the need for pro-active support in promoting entrepreneurship development among women. The duration of these programs vary from 2 to 5 days.

Trainers Training Program (TTP) : AWAKE owes the success of its EDPs because to its holistic approach in including all developmental agencies, both government and NGOs, in its training programs. Trainers Training Program (TTP) is aimed at capacity building of participating and non participating NGOs to deliver effective entrepreneurship development programs in rural areas, thereby increasing the outreach. This also creates a 'support system' close at hand for aspiring entrepreneurs in the rural areas after AWAKE withdraws from the project. The participants from NGOs and other agencies involved in enterprise development from each local area are selected and are provided training in entrepreneurship development and all its constituents: entrepreneurship, business management, project development, business counseling, motivational tools, training tools, gender sensitivity and mentoring. The duration of the program vary from 2 weeks to 30 days. AWAKE's training team supports these agencies through coordination of training programs conducted by the agencies, effective handholding and frequent follow ups.

➤ SUSTENANCE PROGRAMS:

These programs for existing women entrepreneurs focusing on marketing, management program, technical up-gradation etc.

Marketing and Networking Support: AWAKE, in association with various government and non-governmental agencies, provides a platform for its members and trainees for marketing their products and build their business network through various means.

Management Development Programs (MDP): The objective of MDP is to enhance entrepreneur's skills and technology up gradation in order to support growth and sustenance of their enterprise. Management programs and workshops on various topics such as Finance, Tax Planning, Computer skills, Information Technology Packaging, Marketing, Quality, Import/Export, Communication skills and Human Resource Management are conducted by AWAKE.

Credit Referral: AWAKE is a credit referral agency for members seeking Micro Credit or loans for their enterprises through various government schemes, bank or financial institution linkages. AWAKE supports funding institutions by capacity building of women beneficiaries including SHG women in enterprise development and management through training and support services like market facilitation and skill up-gradation

➤ SUPPORT PROGRAMS: These programs for established women entrepreneurs, providing information and technical support for growth and expansion.

Resource and Research Centre: RRC acts as a nodal centre and an information hub for AWAKE's services. It is responsible for conducting research studies, analysis and documentation for the activities of AWAKE. As a centre for information dissemination, RRC caters to the information requests made by its members, other NGOs, agencies, donors and policy makers. RRC provides information on technology, projects, products, and profiles of women entrepreneurs, business opportunities, finance, exports, management techniques, industry policies and other related subjects. The Business counseling activities are strengthened with necessary information on financial, marketing and technological institutes, providing vital information to the entrepreneurs. A fully equipped library with books related to all aspects of entrepreneurship development, periodicals and newsletters is available for the members. Information related to the activities and programs of AWAKE are disseminated through AWAKE's monthly newsletter '**Voice of AWAKENER**' and website and all AWAKE's **publications** are facilitated through RRC

Membership Services: Membership of AWAKE is open to established entrepreneurs, NGOs engaged in Entrepreneurship Development, women Self Help Groups, Corporate and institutions. Provisional Membership is provided to potential women entrepreneurs.

Types of Membership are:

Regular membership for practicing women entrepreneurs, Provisional membership for prospective entrepreneurs, NGO membership / Associate membership, Corporate / Industrial membership, Life membership for members who have been part of AWAKE for at least two consecutive years and has been an active member.

In line with the principle of 'Entrepreneur guiding Entrepreneur', members of AWAKE contribute their time and expertise in providing services to other members of the organization.

ACHIEVEMENT OF AWAKE

- It has set Business Counseling centers in 20 districts (10 centers have been equipped with technology to conduct Video counseling through webinar and Skype).
- Set up incubators - food processing at Bijapur, Common Facility center at Malavalli , Technology Incubator and computer learning Centre at Bangalore, Computer labs in 5 districts- Bijapur, Gulbarga, Malavalli-Mandya, Koppla and Belgaum).
- Started conducting/facilitating the entrepreneurs to participate in various Exhibitions and Buyers seller Meet at Taluka, District, Regional, National and International level.
- Started AWAKE BAZZAR (weekly bazaar) to support entrepreneurs from rural areas to sell their wares.
- Started Sub-contract exchange (linking entrepreneurs with wholesalers, retailers, multinational corporations and public sector undertakings and many more).

- Ventured into Vocational Training for youth especially school dropouts for employable skill across Karnataka.

AWAKE has 15 office staff for its admin tasks and as an organization, it has a revenue turnover of one core annually; however, the revenue it helps to generate through creating enterprises is beyond ones calculations.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Outstanding Organization Award

AWAKE was conferred Outstanding Organization Award from National Association of YWCA Executives (NAYE), New Delhi, in **1985**.

KLN Award

AWAKE received KLN Award for outstanding contribution to women from KASSIA in the year **1986**.

AG FUND Award

AWAKE was awarded the ARAB GULF FUND AWARD for UNDP (AGFUND) in **2000** in recognition of Entrepreneurship Promotion Amongst Rural Women in Karnataka state of India.

Pioneer Organization Award

Rotary Bangalore Downtown (3190 dist) recognized the contribution of AWAKE in women empowerment by awarding the Pioneer Organization Award in **2008**.

CONCLUSION

Awake is a two-faceted organization. It is an industrial association on one side while on the other, AWAKE is a rural developmental organization. As an industrial association, it is part of all the policy making bodies at both the state and the central governments and on the rural developmental side, its sole focus is to create entrepreneurs. The association has helped to create more than one lakh employment directly and indirectly ever since its creation. AWAKE has counselled more than 40 lakhs women through business counselling and awareness programs; created market linkages through exhibitions, buyer seller meets for over 75000 women entrepreneurs; created a network with over 200 organizations, institutions of regional, national and international level and has reached out to over 50 lakh women in rural and urban areas across the state. Likewise the Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Karnataka (AWAKE) has been playing good role in empowerment of women entrepreneurs in Karnataka.

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